
INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by a citizens' committee appointed by the California Legislature to inquire further into the reasons for the continued decline of the state's salmon and steelhead trout resources. The Advisory Committee's charge has been to develop a management strategy for the Legislature and the Department of Fish and Game to reverse the decline and restore these fisheries to maximum production.

The present Advisory Committee was patterned after a predecessor group that worked from 1970-1975. This first Advisory Committee successfully advocated several changes in California law and administrative policy that have directly assisted the conservation of salmon and steelhead trout.

In 1976, when Congress adopted the national Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, it appeared that federal and state conservation agencies had been given important new tools with which to protect fish life. This new national program—to be carried out on the west coast by a four-state Pacific Fishery Management Council—offered some hope that fishery conditions would improve.

Unfortunately, the decline of salmon and steelhead trout populations and the loss of vital stream habitat continued in California. It was unrelieved in any measurable way by the 1976 federal act.

Responding to the urgent need for decisive action, the Legislature reestablished

the Advisory Committee in 1983, with the clear directive of devising a management strategy to reverse the decline and restore balance to the salmon and steelhead resource.

In order to address this task, the Advisory Committee members divided California's vast coastal and interior areas into 11 watershed or river basin study groups. The Advisory Committee then recruited hundreds of knowledgeable Californians to assist in identifying salmon and steelhead conservation problems and opportunities, watershed by watershed.

The findings and recommendations in this report represent several years of investigation. They incorporate the work of the watershed groups, special studies conducted by Committee members or specialists under contract, and discussions with fishery professionals and concerned citizens.

It is difficult to condense such extensive research and so many reports into one slim, easy-to-understand document; consequently, the findings and recommendations articulate only the most fundamental and pressing of these concerns. A more thorough discussion of these and other problems may be found in the documents cited in the appendices. If items are missing, it is because of the constraints of time, not a lack of importance.

The issues that affect California's salmon

"This trend of decline is the cumulative result of nearly a century of water and land use practices and policies that have favored development of other natural resources over the conservation of fish..."



PHOTO: EARL CARPENTER

and steelhead trout resource are varied, interrelated and substantial. Of these, several continued to surface throughout the Advisory Committees investigations. They are matters of special urgency that *must* be addressed immediately. Resolution of these issues will provide the solid and positive foundation envisioned for California's salmon and steelhead trout recovery program. Summarized here, they will be discussed, in depth, throughout the report:

- 1)The state must adopt an overall plan for the conservation and restoration of the salmon and steelhead trout fisheries. This program should include explicit goals, a timetable for completion, adequate funding and opportunities for citizen involvement. Such a program has been offered in Senate Bill 2261. (Full text of SB-2261, page 53.)
- 2)Stream protection provisions of the California Forest Practice Act must be strengthened. Senate Bill 1335, now pending before the State Assembly, gives needed emphasis to fish habitat and water quality in the Forest Practice Act. (Full text of SB-1335, page 57.)

- 3)The Delta salmon stream flow protection standard established by the State Water Resources Control Board in 1978 is too low and must be increased. The Joint Legislative Committee on Fisheries and Aquiculture should bring this matter to the immediate attention of the Water Board.
- 4)The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Central Valley Project current water marketing program is premature and must be suspended until the stream-low needs of fish are determined. The Legislature should ask Congress to direct the Bureau to suspend this program so damaging to fish life. (See Senate Joint Resolution 43, page 58.)
- 5)The loss of juvenile salmon to unscreened or inadequately screened irrigation diversions has reached intolerable levels. The Department of Fish and Game must enforce fish screen laws more vigorously. The Department's efforts will be aided and strengthened by Senate Bill 2390, now being considered by the Legislature. (Full text of SB-2390, page 56.)